

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1963

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 9428

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US, XF

SUBJ: THE SOVIETS AND THE MIDDLE EAST

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

REF: A. MOSCOW 8864

B. MOSCOW 9354

1. SUMMARY. SINCE THE SECRETARY'S LAST MEETING WITH GROMYKO, THE SOVIETS HAVE KEPT A LOW PROFILE ON MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS AND SOVIET POLICY HAS REMAINED LARGELY DORMANT. HOWEVER, AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF WASHINGTON'S ACTIVE CONSULTATIONS WITH ARAB AND ISRAELI LEADERS AND MOSCOW'S UNCERTAINTY ABOUT
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THE OUTCOME OF THE U.S.'S MIDDLE EAST REASSESSMENT, THE

SOVIETS HAVE CONTINUED THEIR EFFORTS TO GAIN AN ACTIVE
ROLE IN THE NEXT MIDDLE EAST ROUND. END SUMMARY.

2. THE SOVIETS HAVE PURSUED THIS OBJECTIVE BY FURTHER SEEKING
TO BOLSTER THEIR IMAGE OF MODERATION AND FLEXIBILITY REGARDING
BOTH THE BASES FOR A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT AND THE MODALITIES
FOR NEGOTIATING IT. THUS, MOSCOW HAS CONTINUED TO BALANCE
SUPPORT FOR ARAB DEMANDS THAT ISRAEL WITHDRAW FROM THE OCCUPIED
TERRITORIES AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE PALESTINIANS' RIGHT TO FORM A
STATE WITH FURTHER EXPLICIT ASSURANCES TO TEL AVIV (E.G.,
IN THE CPSU-ISRAELI COMMUNIST PARTY COMMUNIQUE JUNE 16) THAT
THE USSR SUPPORTS ISRAEL'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND IS WILLING
TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEES OF A PEACESETTLEMENT
BASED ON ISRAEL'S 1967 FRONTIERS.

3. IN A SIMILAR VEIN, MOSCOW HAS ALSO SOUGHT TO ASSUME A
FLEXIBLE POSTURE REGARDING FURTHER MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS.
WHILE CONTINUING TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF REVIVING THE
GENEVA CONFERENCE (MOST RECENTLY IN TALKS WITH THE U.S.
SENATORIAL DELEGATION) AND SHARPLY CRITICIZING AMERICAN AND
ISRAELI EFFORTS TO REVIVE SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY, SOVIET SPOKESMEN
HAVE CONTINUED TO AVOID RIGID FORMULAS ABOUT THE TIMING AND
FORM OF FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS. THUS WHILE PYRLIN DENIED THAT
THE USSR HAS SHELVED THE GENEVA CONFERENCE (REF A), HE CLEARLY
INDICATED THAT MOSCOW DOES NOT FORESEE OR ADVOCATE ITS URGENT
RECONVENING. RATHER, HE REAFFIRMED THE SOVIET VIEW THAT CAREFUL
PREPARATION MUST PRECEDE ANY REOPENING OF THE CONFERENCE AND
INITIMATED THAT THIS COULD NOT BE EXPECTED BEFORE THE LATE FALL.
THIS APPROACH IS ALSO REFLECTED BY THE SOVIETS' RELATIVELY
RELAXED PUBLIC ATTITUDE TOWARD GENEVA'S RESUMPTION AND THE
ABSENCE IN RECENT PUBLIC COMMENT OF CALLS FOR THE CONFERENCE'S
URGENT RECONVENING.

4. SIMILARLY, SOVIET STATEMENTS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT MOSCOW
REMAINS FLEXIBLE ABOUT EMPLOYMENT OF A PHASED APPROACH TO
NEGOTIATING A PEACE AGREEMENT. PYRLIN, FOR EXAMPLE, SAID
THAT MOSCOW COULD SUPPORT A PHASED APPROACH, PROVIDING ALL THE
INTERESTED PARTIES WRE INVOLVED IN AND AGREED TO SEPARATE OR
PARTIAL STEPS. AT THE SAME TIME, SOVIET PUBLIC STATEMENTS HAVE
BEEN NOTABLY DEVOID OF CRITICISM OF NEGOTIATING PARTIAL MEASURES
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PER SE. HOWEVER, AS BEFORE, THIS WRIT DOES NOT APPEAR TO EXTEND
TO A REVIVAL OF SHUTTLE DIPLOMACY OR A RETURN TO THE SEPARATE
NEGOTIATION OF PARTIAL STEPS UNDER EXCLUSIVE U.S. AUSPICES.
THUS BOTH IZVESTIYA EDITOR TOLKUNOV AND TASS DIRECTOR ZAMYATIN
IN TALKS WITH THE U.S. SENATORIAL DELEGATION ECHOED IZVESTIYA'S
JUNE 25 EDITORIAL IN SHARPLY CRITICIZING ALLEGED U.S. EFFORTS
TO REVIVE UNILATERAL STEP-BY-STEP PROCEDURES. AND GROMYKO
HIMSELF, IN A TALK WITH THE FRG AMBASSADOR LAST WEEK (REF B),

SAID THAT SEPARATE AGREEMENTS OUTSIDE THE GENEVA FRAMEWORK WOULD "UNDERMINE THE SITUATION" AND BE "DETRIMENTAL" TO PROGRESS TOWARD AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT.

5. SOVIET DIPLOMACY HAS ALSO BEEN LARGELY INACTIVE SINCE THE SECRETARY'S LAST MEETING WITH GROMYKO. THE RESULT OF PONOMAREV'S VISIT TO SYRIA, AND HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH ASAD AND ARAFAT, REMAIN UNCLEAR TO US. THE SOVIETS' LOW LEVEL OF ATTENTION TO IT, COMBINED WITH PYRLIN'S ASSERTION THAT THE VISIT CONCERNED ONLY CPSU-BAATH PARTY AFFAIRS, SUGGESTS THAT THE VISIT DID NOT PRODUCE ANY MAJOR DIPLOMATIC ACHIEVEMENTS REGARDING THE ARAB-ISRAELI CRISIS. AT THE SAME TIME, GROMYKO'S VISIT TO EGYPT, ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED TO FOLLOW IMMEDIATELY UPON HIS MAY MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY, HAS STILL NOT TAKEN PLACE DESPITE PERIODIC REPORTS FROM EGYPTIAN EMBASSY SOURCES HERE THAT THE VISIT WAS SET FOR JUNE.

6. AS THE ABOVE SUGGESTS, MOSCOW SO FAR HAS TAKEN A CAUTIOUS AND PATIENT ATTITUDE DURING WHAT ARE SEEN HERE AS THE CONCLUDING PHASES OF THE U.S.'S POLICY REASSESSMENT. THE SOVIET'S OWN INABILITY TO ACHIEVE A SOLID ARAB CONSENSUS ON GENEVA AND THEIR CLEAR AWARENESS THAT THE CONFERENCE ITSELF IS FRAUGHT WITH INTRACTABLE OBSTACLES PROBABLY PROVIDED MOSCOW WITH LITTLE ALTERNATIVE TO WAITING OUT THE U.S.'S INITIATIVE. HOWEVER, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT IN GROMYKO'S TALKS WITH THE SECRETARY, HE WILL EXPECT TO LEARN WHETHER THE USSR DESIRE FOR U.S.-SOVIET JOINT ACTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST (AS, FOR EXAMPLE, CALLED FOR BY ZAMYATIN IN SPEAKING TO THE HUMPHREY-SCOTT CODEL) HAS YIELDED ANY TANGIBLE RESULTS. I SUSPECT, THEREFORE, THAT GROMYKO'S ASSESSMENT OF THE SECRETARY'S REMARKS MAY WELL BE CRITICAL IN DETERMINING WHETHER SOVIET MIDDLE EAST POLICY REMAINS BENIGN OR SEEKS NEW AND PERHAPS MORE MISCHIEVOUS ALTERNATIVES TO PROMOTE AN ACTIVE SOVIET MIDDLE EAST ROLE.
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